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ABSTRACT

Current reform efforts in early childhood teacher education have recommended movement toward a child-centered learning environment that incorporates nongraded classrooms, cooperative learning, and parent and teacher control of schools. However, several barriers exist in achieving an effective, coordinated delivery system of early childhood professional preparation which would result in implementation of these reforms. These barriers include uncoordinated efforts, lack of economic incentives, various routes of entry into the early childhood field, and insufficient personnel to staff existing programs. Factors to be considered in the creation of a coherent career development system include: (1) the need to eliminate barriers created by historical divisions of early child care, preschool education, and early elementary education; (2) lack of regulatory incentives for training; (3) need for coordination of multiple sources of funding; (4) the need for an expanded, shared knowledge base; (5) the need for standards for trainers; (6) recognition of institutional variables; and (7) acknowledgement of the needs of adult learners. (Contains 21 references.) (JDD)

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A "New" Early Childhood Teacher Education

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The early childhood field is one of the most diverse American education groups encompassing: the kindergarten and primary grades in public and private schools, preschools, child care, infant and toddler programs, school-age after school care, at risk and special education for handicapped preschoolers. The teachers and care givers staffing these programs come from equally diverse professional and paraprofessional backgrounds, ranging from no training prior to employment to those who have completed the Ph.D. degree.

States regulate the early childhood field by licensing child care and related services. The 50 states vary enormously in the level of requirements and the agencies providing oversight. Tradition has not allowed states to regulate the amount or type of professional preparation needed by early childhood teachers in child care or preschool settings. Licensing for elementary and secondary teachers in public schools has been considerably more consistent, but each of the 50 states maintains control over teachers licensed to teach in that state. Kindergarten licensure has been linked to elementary teachers' degree requirements in most states.

Since the onset of the women's movement the numbers of children younger than six in "school" escalated. The division between what constitutes child care and kindergarten blurred. Public schools began to offer before- and after-school programs for children in kindergarten and the lower grades. The pay-gap between public school teachers and child care providers widened. A high turnover rate for teachers of young children in the child care sector became higher. Inservice programs provided the only professional development opportunities many teachers experienced.

While these changes impacted the early childhood field, colleges and universities felt the need to revise their teacher education programs in response to calls for reform. Elementary and secondary reform came first; early childhood education's turn has come.

While the United States struggled to reform education during the last decade, early childhood programs failed to receive rigorous scrutiny (Cooper & Eisenhart, 1990). Little research on early childhood teacher education is reported (Katz & Goffin, 1990; the Handbook of Research on Teacher Education (Houston, 1990) addressed early education issues only peripherally. State policy groups focused their efforts on elementary and secondary education, leaving early childhood changes until other reforms became institutionalized. Teacher educators delayed addressing early childhood until they implemented major changes in elementary programs. Early childhood teacher educators responded to education reform in an idiosyncratic fashion with too many programs continuing to focus on the preparation of "kindergarten teachers." In many teacher preparation programs early childhood education has been an add-on endorsement to an elementary major. Then America 2000 placed early childhood at the reform forefront in 1991 with goal one: "By the year 2000 all children in America will start school ready to learn." The early childhood community cautiously embraced this goal, fearing that the intent was more pressure on teachers and children, pushing young children with an inappropreate academic curriculum.

40% annual turn-over.

Why A "New" Early Childhood Teacher Education

The first wave of reform initiated by the Holmes Group, the National Governors Association, state reforms, and NCATE focused on raising academic standards and was controlled primarily by those outside the teaching profession. Reformers called for testing teachers and students, raising academic achievement scores, and mostly ignored early childhood agendas. The second wave of reform has moved away from such narrow goals and methods to a more child-centered learning environment that incorporates nongraded classrooms, cooperative learning, and parent and teacher control of schools--all compatible with ideals valued by the early childhood profession.

As state and national reforms moved into place during the 1990s, early childhood programs expanded their courses to reflect NAEYC and NCATE requirements for a birth to eight years perspective. Elementary education became more liberal arts based as reform took effect, separating further the elementary and early childhood curricula. It became apparent that the hodgepodge of courses, foci, and separation between early education and child care training should not continue. In 1991 the Carnegie Foundation funded the National Institute for Early Childhood Professional Development to build consensus for developing an articulated system "to assist in the development and implementation of an effective, coordinated delivery system of early childhood professional preparation" (NAEYC, 1991, September, p. 37).

Expansion of the Problem

Barriers to achieving an articulated career development system for the early childhood profession include regulatory, institutional, and economic barriers (National Institute for Early Childhood Professional Development, 1991, p. 36-37). NAEYC has long defined early childhood as birth to eight years, but few professional development programs have been equally committed to preparing personnel to serve in programs across this full age span.

Uncoordinated efforts. In a field that is regulated by diverse policy groups who have not coordinated their efforts on more than a superficial level, the disparity between requirements for **care** and **education** is wide. Child care and preschools are regulated by different standards and bureaucratic agencies unrelated to the system regulating public schools. Only half the states offer specialized early childhood licenses (NAEYC, 1991, p. 37). As public schools expand services to children younger than four, kindergarten add-on programs do not adequately prepare teachers to work with younger children or to coordinate services with primary grade teachers.

Lack of economic incentives. In a field where many service providers are paid minimum wage, the economic incentives for professional preparation are few. "The average hourly wage is $5.35

for this predominantly female work force" (Whitebook, Howes, Phillips, & Pemberton, 1989, p. 45). The National Institute for Early Childhood Professional Development will move the field toward a comprehensive "new" professional training model, encompassing early education **and** child care. A concomitant effort to raise salaries and benefits is also necessary if professionalization efforts will be successful.

Entry and professional preparation. Programs for young children have hired staff with and without formal preparation, consequently, annual turnover of teaching staff nearly tripled in the last decade and reached 41% in 1988 (Whitebook et al., 1989, p. 44) bringing large numbers of women to jobs in the field each year. Inadequate in-service education fills the day care training void for the many paraprofessionals working in the field on a transient basis; however, once staff become "hooked" on working with young children, some return to school for specialized preparation or seek other forms of professional development to improve their skills; some of these even go on for advanced degrees.

Sue Bredekamp (1992) suggests the most common points of entry into the field are the traditional route, the parent route, and the "serendipitous" route. The traditional route for early childhood professionals is a major in education or child development, leading usually to teaching kindergarten or a primary grade. The parent route professionals often discovered early childhood through experiences with their own children in Head Start, cooperative preschools, or as family child care providers. The "serendipitous" route encompasses those professionals who found themselves working with young children after training for some other job or becoming liberally educated. The Child Development Associate (CDA) national credential was set up to ensure the competence of those who entered early childhood positions through nontraditional routes. "More than 27,000 CDA credentials have been awarded" (Feeney, Fromberg, Spodek, & Williams, 1992, p. 417). Many national leaders in early childhood entered the profession through initial degree programs, but just as many others first worked in the field through

the parent or "serendipitous" route, later getting specialized training for working with young children.

Insufficient numbers. In spite of the increasing number of early childhood professionals who enter the field through various routes, colleges and universities are not producing nearly the number of graduates in early childhood and related fields to staff existing programs. Joan Costley of Wheelock College (cited in NAEYC, 1991) found that graduates of existing 2- and 4-year early childhood programs provide only enough staff to meet the current needs of Massachusetts and New York. This fact, linked with the low salary and benefits available in the U. S. to those who work with young children, leaves many preschools, child care programs, Head Start centers, kindergartens, and infant programs staffed by nonprofessionals who have little or no specific early childhood preparation.

Clearly, a coherent career development system is needed. Michael Levine (1992, p. 50) of the Carnegie Foundation believes that even though "billions of new dollars for Head Start, child care, preschool education, early intervention. . .[are victories, they will not make us] succeed [unless] there is a united, purposeful, and energetic push to convince the public that our agenda is essential to America's success." A coalition of public interests, parents, and providers can convince policy makers and business leaders to build an infrastructure to support higher quality, more accessible, and better compensated child care and education.

Early Childhood Teacher Education

The early childhood field needs a common language and a common vision of what it can become. NAEYC has worked on a common nomenclature over the last decade. As states revise their early childhood guidelines and institutions change programs, a common vocabulary will strengthen the profession and provide a basis for cohesion. Even among 4-year colleges and universities, inconsistencies exist about what constitutes early childhood. NAEYC reviews institutions' early childhood programs for national accreditation by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher

Education (NCATE). NAEYC recently added 2-year standards to their 4- and 5-year guidelines, although NCATE does not accredit 2-year programs. With the impetus of the National Institute for Early Childhood Professional Development, progress on a common nomenclature, vision, and collaborative approaches will continue to move the early childhood field forward.

Historic divisions created barriers. "Early child care, preschool education, and early elementary education are currently viewed and organized as separate fields, with distinct preparation and training paths, financing, and staffing patterns" (Copple, 1991, p. vii). Early education in the U. S. emerged from the conflicting traditions of the kindergarten, nursery school, and child care movements. Independent training schools provided kindergarten teachers specialized preparation in the late 19th century; normal schools designed to train elementary teachers replaced kindergarten training schools (McLean & Johnston, 1992). Professional organizations reinforced the association between kindergarten and primary education as kindergartens became part of the public school system. State departments of education began regulating both kindergarten and elementary education. Eventually 4-year baccalaureate degree programs supplanted the 3-year normal school pattern as teacher education programs were absorbed into universities.

The nursery school movement developed in colleges of home economics with a multidisciplinary perspective of family and child study, social work, psychology, nursing, and medicine. Land grant universities and state university systems designed child development programs incorporating these various views. States do not mandate licensing regulations for child development programs; however, now that 30 states provide some public school programs for three- and four-year-olds, there is a trend to revise state early childhood teacher licensure to conform to NAEYC's early childhood teacher education policies (McLean & Johnston, 1992, p. 421).

Child care training has been only loosely linked to degree programs. Technical schools and CDA provide training for entry level skills; ad hoc in-service programs are the norm. Too often child care

providers have no training prior to employment. State child care center licensing standards usually require minimum workshop training or other substantially less stringent standards than those mandated for public school early childhood teachers. Public school teachers complete graduate degrees in increasing numbers. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) plans to offer an early childhood certificate for master teachers who complete degree programs and demonstrate mastery-level teaching skills (National Institute for Early Childhood Professional Development, 1991, p. 37).

Lack of incentives cause barriers to training. Professional credentialing and state regulatory systems provide incentives that drive training in most fields. "Both are inadequate in the early childhood field. Regulatory incentives for training are uneven across the states and are minimal in most. More than half the states do not require any preservice education or training for child care workers, and only about a quarter require more than 10 hours of in-service annually" (Copple, 1991, p. 6). Day care licensing regulations operate from a minimum standards perspective; teacher education reform is moving to ensure a high quality preparation and credentialing process. The disparity in views and the diversity of the field interfere with gaining easy support from all segments of the early childhood community for a coordinated professional development system. While K-12 teacher licensing strongly influences teacher education programs, Head Start and child care teachers have no similar requirements, but may choose voluntary assessment through the CDA process.

Inadequate compensation and benefits is the other major lack of incentive for training. Pay for teachers of young children who are not in the public schools often hovers near the minimum wage level with few retirement or health benefits. Such low financial incentives affect recruitment to the field, stimulate rapid turnover, and discourage preservice training. Additional training is rarely linked to additional compensation. Parents do not often choose providers based on their level of education.

Direct barriers to training, in addition to the lack of incentives mentioned, are: (a) the cost of classes and lack of support for released time, (b) the time and energy required after long days with children, (c) a lack of academic self-confidence, (d) irrelevant or low quality training (Copple, 1991, p. 6). "Today's system of early childhood preparation and training is characterized by fragmentation, a shortage of qualified personnel, high turnover, inadequate career ladders, too many barriers and too few incentives for training, and a lack of consumer demand for well-trained personnel" (p. 7). A massive support system will be needed to sell the importance of professional preparation in a field that required little preparation.

An effective delivery system needed. Delivery of professional development training is chaotic and fragmented in such a climate. Copple suggests ten principles that are critical to an effective delivery system: (1) assure a minimal, "generic" level of basic competence, (2) nurture diversity of training within the field, (3) balance the need for quality with an adequate supply of early childhood workers, (4) recognize subspecialties of knowledge and skills within the overall early childhood domain, (5) foster productive career ladders, (6) emphasize the training of directors, coordinators, and lead teachers, (7) maintain access to jobs for individuals of different cultural groups and income levels, (8) create a continuum of training, (9) maximize incentives and minimize barriers to training, and (10) assure stable and adequate funding for training (pp. 7-9). For such a delivery system to work private and public funds from the federal, state, and local levels will need to be judicially coordinated to maximize the contributions of each type of funding.

The early childhood knowledge base(s): Early childhood's knowledge bases are rooted in child development, social work, family relationships, anthropology, as well as health, developmentally appropriate practice, and special education. The historical roots of early childhood traditions and practices created a diverse regulatory system focused on a multidisciplinary collection of professional

concerns. The knowledge base issue in elementary and secondary teacher education is a complex, thorny problem that colleges and universities are just now working out in response to the Holmes Group, the American Association for Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE), and NCATE. Bredekamp and Willer (1992) suggest a "ladder and lattices, cores and cones" knowledge base model. "Lattices" with interlocking connections portray multiple roles, entry points, and settings instead of a single career ladder model. The "cone" reflects the goal of an expanding, shared knowledge base for an articulated system of professional development. When all early childhood staff are professionally prepared to work with children enrolled in whatever portion of the service sector, current inequities in status and compensation among early childhood professionals will be mitigated.

Standards for trainers. Teacher education literature provides more discussion about the process and content of early childhood education than about the background and characteristics of teacher educators. There is a need for standards for trainers. Feeney et. al. (1992, p. 418) suggest that "the role of teacher educator [can be viewed] as an extension of the role of teacher with some important differences." The personal characteristics of teachers of young children are valued in early childhood teacher educators: warmth, nurturing, intelligence, and cultural sensitivity. In addition early childhood teacher educators are advocates, methodologists, and adaptors of theory, research, and craft knowledge to fit the needs of teachers and administrators of programs for young children. Early educators teach their students to adapt lessons and plans to the needs of the children they teach; teacher educators adapt curriculum, teaching techniques, and research findings to be philosophically consistent with early childhood approaches (Feeney et. al., 1992). Early childhood teacher educators need to have experienced the variety of programs and approaches impacting staff working directly with children.

Institutional variables. Teacher educators teaching early childhood courses have not always held appropriate credentials,

degrees, and backgrounds. This was particularly true in schools, colleges, and departments of education (SCDE) with add-on endorsements for kindergarten teachers. Early childhood courses were taught too often by whatever faculty were willing and available. NAEYC reviews early childhood folios of institutions seeking NCATE accreditation. NCATE Board of Examiner teams determine professional backgrounds of faculty for "appropriateness of fit" for teaching assignments. Staff who are qualified through completion of a professional early childhood program and experienced with young children from birth to eight years should supervise practicum students and deliver early childhood instruction. The delivery system can be effective if people who know how to work appropriately with young children supervise students' efforts (Caruso & Fawcett, 1986). Standards for trainers will continue to be an issue since all programs do not seek accreditation or meet NCATE guidelines. The majority of people in the field do not hold 4-year early childhood degrees and no national standards apply to the many trainers in 2-year colleges and technical schools. CDA trainers meet rigorous screening procedures but their standards do not necessarily coincide with standards needed for early childhood teacher educators in colleges and universities.

Another aspect of developing standards for trainers is that institutions reward teaching and research differentially. Colleges and universities cope in various ways with the dilemma of rewarding faculty who are successful in research and publishing, knowing that undergraduate teacher education calls on faculty to model good teaching practices. Institutions are concluding that "teaching and research are inescapably incompatible" (Barnett, 1992, p. A40). Their solutions are increasingly creative and certainly diverse. We will likely conclude in early childhood that we cannot accept a narrow view of trainer preparation, just as we have not been able to accept a narrow view of other facets of the field.

Adult learner issues. Teacher educators acknowledge that children's thinking is different from adults' thinking, but do little to recognize the needs of adult learners change over time. Lilian Katz

(1992) provocatively reveals her own consternation about how to teach early education undergraduates after years of successful teaching of graduate students. Undergraduates have not reached an adult stage of development enabling them to relate adequately to either teachers' or parents' dilemmas. They rejected topics she believed essential to their preparation. Katz herself found the knowledge base and relevant content too thin to support an entire course on parent involvement techniques. She could not locate sufficient numbers of appropriate practicum sites where her students could work with professionally-prepared staff. Within the department students encountered conflicting ideologies and contradictory techniques often taught by faculty unavailable for informal contact where such differences in perspectives could be explored comfortably. Katz recommends an "optimum informality principle" that allows frequent informal contact with students, uncovering learners' needs. Faculty in research institutions are not likely to have such time available. Graduate teaching assistants carry the burden of undergraduate classes while also carrying heavy responsibility for their own professional development; thus, teaching assistants also may not have the time for undergraduates to process learning informally. They may never have taught adults before and may be struggling to be successful students, and teachers of adults, simultaneously .

Elizabeth Jones (1986) recommends "an active learning approach" that is philosophically consistent with best practice in early childhood education. Her book tells her story about how to teach child development while building relationships, empowering learners, valuing diversity, and trusting students' potential--approaches early childhood teachers practice with young children. Early childhood teachers enter the field with many different levels of professional experience. Elbow (1986) suggests that since learning is thinking and teaching is interdisciplinary, learning is helping students figure out categories (p. 13). Students come knowing many things, having diverse backgrounds, putting together understandings in unique ways. Early childhood, more than other teacher education

areas, must find methods to help students figure out categories about what they may already know.

Conclusions

Early childhood education struggles to professionalize a highly diverse field that emerged from historical roots and traditions that fragmented teacher education and professional development efforts. The field suffers from uncoordinated policies and a lack of economic incentives. Entry into the profession is sporadic and movement to greater levels of responsibility has not been tied to professional preparation. Teacher education needs to strengthen its early childhood programs and recruit students at all levels who will enlarge the cadre of trained professionals. Common goals, vocabulary, and preparation will enhance the efforts of the National Institute for Early Childhood Professional Development.

Historic barriers to a coherent perspective can be overcome with an effective, collaborative delivery system. "There remains the question of whether there is an adequate knowledge base for early childhood practice that can serve as a foundation for professional practice" (Spodek, 1992, p. 4). As this century began the exploration of how children grow and develop began. As we move into the next century we can build on the enormous store of information amassed from the child study movement and educational research. Clearly early childhood education is not supported by a single knowledge base that provides a theoretical base for all aspects of the profession. The next decade can provide a period of articulation between the many facets of the field and with related fields.

Other countries throughout the world fund and support early childhood education in ways that could be instructive to the United States as we overhaul a system long in need of such efforts. Early childhood cannot achieve a "new" teacher education without incorporating successful models from other countries to shape the span of professional training existing in the U. S.--CDA, preservice training workshops, 2- and 4-year programs, and graduate education (Morgan, 1991). An inclusive approach to diversity has served the field well as we strive to serve children's needs; the same inclusive

approach is the only one that will work as the early childhood field seeks a new level of professionalism in its teacher preparation efforts.

Kagan (1991) sees a paradigm shift in the valuing of collaboration in the '90s. Preschool programs teach cooperation; early childhood teacher education can extend the practice of collaboration. Research has indicated that "the most important determinant of the quality of children's experiences are the adults who are responsible for children's care and education; specialized preparation is a critical predictor of these adults' ability to provide high-quality experiences for children" (NAEYC, 1991, September, p. 37). If America's children are to receive high quality programming, America's teachers of young children must have high quality training options at all levels of the lattice of preparation available to them.

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